



South Dakota Department of the Military South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs



SOUTH DAKOTA NOTIFIED OF FUNDING FOR STATE VETERANS HOME

The State of South Dakota has been notified that federal grant funding will be made available to build a new state veterans' home in Hot Springs. South Dakota's application was selected for approval from a long list of projects submitted to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

"South Dakota remains committed to providing high-quality care for our veterans," Gov. Dennis Daugaard said. "A new veterans' home in Hot Springs is an important part of making sure we continue to provide great care to South Dakota's heroes for generations to come. Federal grant funding allows the state to keep moving forward with this important project."

South Dakota's proposal calls for the construction of a new 100-bed facility in Hot Springs at an estimated total cost of about \$34.6 million. Federal grant funding would pay for 65 percent of the project for a total of \$22.5 million. The state would be responsible for 35 percent of the funding, or \$12.5 million.

"Getting this grant is a big win for South Dakota," Gov. Daugaard added. "With the federal budget crisis, there was no guarantee that our project would be funded. South Dakota's hard working employees at the Department of Veterans' Affairs did a great job ensuring that the state submitted an application that really stood out from the rest."

Deputy Secretary Steve Harding commended all of those involved in this project. He said, "It has been a long process to get to this great news! It was a cooperative effort by everyone involved and what a wonderful result for our state, our veterans and their families."

Funding for the state veterans' home will be available until the end of the 2012 federal fiscal year on Sept. 30, 2012. South Dakota must complete the final steps of the grant application process by June 15 in order to receive funding during this fiscal year. The grant will become final after the state receives approval from the U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

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114TH RECEIVES TOP HONORS

The South Dakota Air National Guard's 114th Comptroller Flight received top honors at the annual National Guard Bureau Financial Management and Comptroller Awards.

Each year, the National Guard Bureau's financial management division recognizes the most outstanding Air National Guard units in nation in the categories of Financial Management Comptroller Office of the Year, Financial Analysis Office of the Year and Financial Services Office of the Year. The award criterion is based upon a FM unit's outstanding achievements, mission impact and management of resources.

The 114th Comptroller Flight provides financial management, for more than 1,000 airmen, in the areas of services and analysis, which deals directly with the overall execution of funds, military, civilian and travel pay, accounting management, and customer service.



SFVAHCS ANNOUNCES ADDITION OF NEW DEPARTMENT

The Sioux Falls VA Health Care System announces the addition of a new department, Non-VA Care Coordination (NVCC) Department. This new department will manage care authorized for a veteran when he/she requires services the VA is not able to provide. In some cases, it's also authorized in local communities for services (such as optometry and podiatry) to ensure veterans receive timely, cost-effective care close to their homes.

The Non-VA Care Coordination Dept. is designed to ensure that the VA provides veterans first-class, safe care that is also cost-effective. It is organizationally aligned under Quality Resource Management (QRM) and will be managed by Lisa Seeley. Staff were previously with QRM and the Fee Unit within the Business Office.

Questions about this new department? Call Barb Galbraith at Ext. 6903 or Lisa Seeley at Ext. 6578.



EMPLOYERS OBSERVE MILITARY TRAINING

Employers of South Dakota Air National Guard Airmen had the rare opportunity to observe their citizen-Airmen as they trained this week at Tyndall Air Force Base, Fla.

Members of the SDANG will be in Florida for two weeks to participate in Combat Archer, the air-to air Weapons System Evaluation Program conducted by the 53rd Weapons Evaluation Group at Tyndall.

The 22 employers participated in an Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) Bosslift Jan. 31 and Feb. 1, departing from Joe Foss Field, S.D., to the Air Force base in Florida.

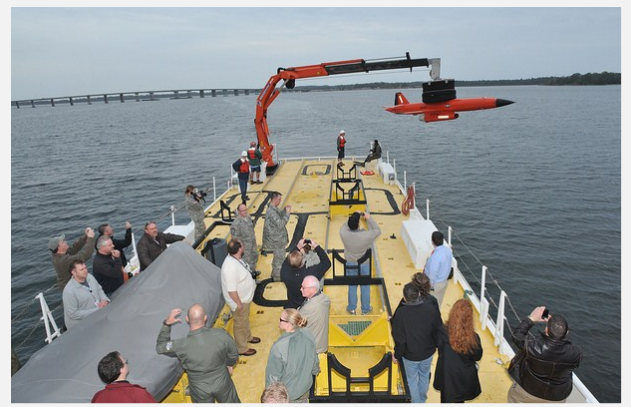
"Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve is the Department of Defense volunteer agency that seeks to promote a culture in which all American employers value their employee's military service," said Capt. Lona Christensen, South Dakota ESGR executive director. "These trips take the employers from the workplace to the training site so they can see the type and quality of training that their employee receives when they leave to fulfill their military obligations."

Employers began their day by boarding an Iowa Air National Guard KC-135 Stratotanker military aircraft at the Air National Guard base at Joe Foss Field. As the aircraft traveled to Florida, the employers were able to observe as the military tanker refueled two F-16 Fighting Falcons flown by 175th Fighter Squadron pilots of the SDANG. The mid-air transfer of jet fuel from tanker to fighter jet is an exciting sight and a great way to start their action packed two day trip.

Once they arrived at Tyndall, employers had the opportunity to see more aircraft from the Air Force fleet including the F-22 Raptor, F-16 Fighting Falcon, F-4 Phantom, and BQM-167 Air Force Subscale Aerial Target. Tyndall has the distinction of being one of only a few locations in the United States where live missiles can be fired at aerial targets.

Another part of the Bosslift was the employers signing of the Statement of Support for the Guard and Reserve. This is a public proclamation of their support for their employees' military service and benefits both the employee and employer.

"These trips are a huge deal to us," said Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general for the South Dakota National Guard. "Without the support of our employers we can't do our mission. We've been able to show these employers the tactical nature of the National Guard and what the training looks like, to help them understand what it means to be in the Guard."



SOCIAL SECURITY INFORMATION FOR THOSE WHO SERVED IN THE MILITARY

Earnings for active duty military service or active duty training have been covered under Social Security since 1957. Social Security also has covered inactive duty service in the Armed Forces reserves (such as weekend drills) since 1988. If you served in the military before 1957, you did not pay Social Security taxes, but they gave you special credit for some of your service when you applied for Social Security benefits.

You can get both Social Security benefits and military retirement. Generally, there is no reduction of Social Security benefits because of your military retirement benefits. You'll get your full Social Security benefit based on your earnings.

When you reach age 65, you'll also be eligible for Medicare. If you have health care insurance from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) or under the TRICARE or CHAMPVA program, your health benefits may change or end when you become eligible for Medicare. You should contact the VA, the Department of Defense, or a military health benefits advisor for more information.

Your Social Security benefit depends on your earnings, averaged over your working lifetime. Generally, the higher your earnings, the higher your Social Security benefit. Under certain circumstances,

special earnings can be credited to your military pay record for Social Security purposes. The extra earnings are for periods of active duty or active duty for training. These extra earnings may help you qualify for Social Security or increase the amount of your Social Security benefit. NOTE: In all cases, the additional earnings are credited to the earnings that they average over your working lifetime, not directly to your monthly benefit amount.

Under certain circumstances, special extra earnings for periods of active duty from 1957 through 2001 can also be credited to your Social Security earnings record for benefit purposes.

From 1957 through 1977, \$300 in additional earnings for each calendar quarter in which you received active duty basic pay is credited to your record. We add the credits from 1957 through 1967 when you apply for benefits. The extra credits were automatically added to your record from 1968 through 1977.

From 1978 through 2001, for every \$300 in active duty basic pay, you are credited with an additional \$100 in earnings up to a maximum of \$1,200 a year. The credits are automatically added to your record.

After 2001, there are no special extra earnings credits for military service.

You can read more by visiting the Military Service page of our Retirement Planner, available at www.socialsecurity.gov/retire2/veterans.htm.

Get a quick and accurate estimate of your future retirement benefits, use the online planners to prepare for retirement and even apply for Social Security retirement, disability, and Medicare online. If you receive benefits, you can change your address and direct deposit, replace your Medicare card or SSA-1099, request a proof of income letter, and so much more! It's also a valuable resource for information about all of Social Security's programs.

In addition to using the website, you can call Social Security toll-free at 1-800-772-1213. All calls are treated confidentially. Specific questions can be answered from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. Information is provided by automated phone service 24 hours a day. The automated response system can be used to change an address or request a replacement Medicare card. If deaf or hard of hearing, call Social Security's TTY number, 1-800-325-0778.



OPERATION BLACK HILLS CABIN

Founded in 2011 by Jeff and Pat Baird, a retired military couple, Operation Black Hills Cabin is located just outside of Custer SD, in the beautiful Black Hills. Its purpose is to offer a week's vacation to qualifying wounded veterans and their families, from the Iraq/Afghanistan campaign, at little or no expense to them, with the exception of transportation.

To qualify for a vacation, the service member or veteran must:

★ Have served in Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom, or Operation New Dawn.

★ Have been Combat Injured at a minimum of 30%.

Jeff and Pat's dream to provide a vacation opportunity for qualifying veterans and their family didn't end with providing a cabin. Pat and Jeff met with community business leaders to garner their support and support they received. Entities sponsoring and donating to this 501(c)(3) non-profit are: JnM De-

sign, Bavarian Inn, Mammoth Site, National Museum of Woodcarving, Custer Vacation House, Purple Pie Place, Cattleman's Steak & Fish House, Custer County Candy Company, Frontier Photo, Slate Creek Grille, Wrangler Café, The Lost Sock, Top of the Hills Business Consulting Services, Custer Business Solutions, Inc., Custer Subway, Sign Works, City of Custer, Bear Country USA, Reptile Gardens, Jewel Cave National Monument, Wind Cave National Park, Mt. Rushmore Society, U-Top-It Frozen Yogurt, TELCO Federal Credit Union, Baker's Bakery & Café, Espresso & More, Xanterra Parks & Resorts, Wheels West, Dakota Cowboy, Sage Creek Grille, VFW #3442, VFW Auxiliary #3442, Beaver Lake Campground, Custer County 1880 Courthouse Museum, Four Mile Old West Town, Custer State Park Jeep Rides, Spring Valley Ranch, Captain's Table, Grizzly Gulch Adventure Golf, Alpine Inn, Crazy Horse Monument, United Country Realty/Dakota Properties, Street Dakota Properties, Pamida, Rafter J Bar Ranch Pancakes, Gold Camp Cabins, Spirit Horse Escape, Tracy Kelley Law Office, President's Alpine Slide, Black Forest Inn, and Flintstones Bedrock City.

Veterans and their family will receive gift certificates and coupons to partake in many activities in the Hills.

If you know of any veterans that might qualify for this offer, we would encourage you to contact Jeff and Pat Baird at the address below. The application form can be downloaded at:

http://operationblackhillscabin.org/operation_blackhillscabin_application.pdf.

Additional information can be found at: info@operationblackhillscabin.org



★ **Operation Black Hills Cabin**
★ **P O Box 855**
★ **Custer, SD 57730**
★ **605-517-1830**
★ **E-mail: info@operationblackhillscabin.org**

CVSOS MEET WITH CONGRESSWOMAN NOEM

County Veterans Service Officers in western South Dakota met with Congresswoman Kristi Noem and her staff last week. Issues focused on medication for incarcerated veterans, pension, priority group 8 veterans, beneficiary travel, and OIF/OND/OEF veterans needs. Director Charles Claussen and Field Officer Paul Gremse, from the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs participated in the briefing.

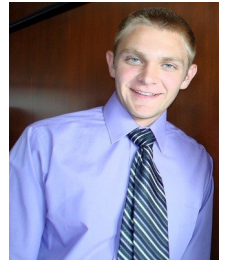


BRANDON VALLEY TEEN RECEIVES NATIONAL YOUTH VOLUNTEER AWARD

Casey Callies, a senior at Brandon Valley High School, has been awarded the National Guard's Family Programs Youth Volunteer. The annual award is presented to a National Guard military youth 15-17 years old, who exhibits exemplary commitment to and support of the National Guard Family Programs.

Casey began participating in the South Dakota National Guard's Youth Council as a high school freshman and for the last two years has served as the council's president.

Casey comes from an Air National Guard family that includes his father, Lt. Col. Kevin Callies, brother, Staff Sgt. Kevin Callies and sister, Senior Airman Sarah Callies.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Feb. 18—SFVAHCC Variety Show

Mar. 7—VABHHCS Veterans Creative Arts Show—Fort Meade

Mar. 19—VABHHCS Veterans Creative Arts Show—Hot Springs

Apr. 27-29—VABHHCS Women's Retreat—Fort Meade

Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer
South Dakota Department of the Military
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs
Soldiers and Sailors Building
425 E Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501
Phone: 605-773-8242
E-mail address: audry.ricketts@state.sd.us
Web site: <http://mva.sd.gov>

